

WATT'S UP

AT LA PLATA ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

NOVEMBER 2015

LPEA

La Plata Electric Association, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

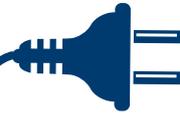


Photo: Ray Pierotti

Are you prepared for this?

The proverbial “theys” are predicting a significant El Niño weather pattern for this winter – even stronger than the one that brought heavy, wet snow to the region in Dec.-Jan. 2007-2008. Mother Nature was not kind to LPEA’s system (nor Tri-State’s transmission lines), resulting in outages to thousands of LPEA customers – some for nearly a week – as it took time for crews to both find the numerous faults and make repairs in feet of snow.

“We are proactive in our maintenance, doing our best to keep the system in top shape to help it withstand significant weather,” says Justin Talbot, manager of operations. “But the so-called ‘Bruce Lee’ of El Niños, could pack a punch and we want our members to be prepared, just in case we experience extended outages.”

When storms are predicted, be aware of the temperature. If it’s well below freezing, the snow likely will be low moisture, remain light and fluffy, and not adhere to LPEA’s lines (or tree branches that could potentially fall through the lines). Hovering at 32 degrees through an extended storm can mean the wet snow will accumulate on LPEA’s lines, affecting the system, possibly producing widespread outages.

The magnitude of the storm, and resulting damage, will determine LPEA’s response time. Outages affecting larger groups of members will be first priority, so LPEA can restore power to as many people as possible at one time. This does not take precedence over our medical-needs members.

“I tell my friends and neighbors in the face of a long outage to relax and pretend you’re camping,” says Indiana Reed, public information officer. “But to be comfortable, you’ll need to have made preparations in advance.”

When a storm is forecast, charge all cell phones, tablets or laptops, and keep an old corded phone handy as it will function without electricity. Make sure batteries for lanterns and flashlights are fresh, and have candles and matches for back up. Stock up on water, foods that don’t need preparation, pet food, infant formula, prescription medications and gasoline for snowblowers or generators, plus have a manual can opener and first aid kit.

Keep wood for fireplaces and stoves dry, and with backup gasoline generators, make sure they are correctly connected, for your safety and ours. An expanded outage checklist is available at www.lpea.coop.

Also, help LPEA keep you informed in the event of an outage. Update your phone numbers at 970.247.5786. If the LPEA Outage Management System recognizes an incoming phone number when an outage is reported, it can provide information. Also, follow La Plata Electric on Twitter, to keep current on the progress of restoring power for outages affecting 250 members or more.

“And know, when there is an outage, no matter the weather conditions or time of day or night, LPEA’s line crews will be doing their best to get our members back in power safely as quickly as possible,” says Talbot.

Homegrown... Farmers Fresh lit with LEDs

Everything looks better under LED lights – especially food.

That's certainly what the owners of the new Farmers Fresh at 535 Goddard Ave. in the heart of Ignacio have realized since opening the doors of the new market, deli and pharmacy this past summer.

The property is owned by the McClanahan and Swanemyr families, leased and operated by Brook and Ezra Lee, with Ezra's brother Amos running the store as general manager. LPEA Project Specialist Ray Pierotti worked with the owners, as well as project manager Mark Crom throughout construction to ensure the lighting for the new facility met the needs and was also energy efficient. Turns out, even though the facility is now nearly 22,000 sq. ft. (as opposed to the original nearly 18,000 sq. ft. of the former Shur Value store closed in 2014), it's using less electricity.

"I'm expecting a 30 percent reduction over the electricity usage of the previous store just from the lighting," says Pierotti, who has begun monitoring usage to give Farmers Fresh confidence that opting for LED lighting was worth the investment.



Looking at the lights: LPEA Project Specialist Ray Pierotti reviews FarmersFresh lighting with General Manager Amos Lee.

Installing the new LED lighting (plus nine efficient solar tubes) was no small commitment for Farmers Fresh as the cost of materials alone was nearly \$100,000. The company did, however, receive a more than \$12,000 rebate from LPEA, and Pierotti estimates a rapid return on investment, followed by on-going energy savings for years to come.

"This was the largest LED New Construction rebate I've seen," says Pierotti. "LPEA is happy to play a role in bringing a grocery store with energy efficient lighting back to Ignacio."

Based on the lighting installed, Farmers Fresh realized a 16 kW reduction. The estimates don't take into consideration the new refrigeration and upgraded equipment throughout the store, so energy savings will likely be even greater.

Overall, beyond lighting, Farmers Fresh is looking at sustainability as the business moves forward – including the health of the population.

"We're trying to be a leader," says Amos Lee, noting that local, fresh and healthy foods can help townsfolk improve their diets. "It's a delicate balance. As a grocery store, you have to have what people want, but at the same time we want to promote things that are better [health-wise]. It's going to be constantly evolving."

Indeed, serving a multi-cultural community, the offerings are likely more diverse than other area markets, with specialty items traditional for different ethnic cultures available at the store.

The company is also looking forward to developing its 1,000 acres several miles out of town to produce its own beef and lamb for Farmers Fresh, though that will be "down the road," according to Lee.

Contractors exploring new construction are encouraged to contact LPEA for lighting and rebate information. Learn more at www.lpea.coop, or contact Pierotti at 970.382.7770.

New Executive Assistant named



Charis Charistopoulos has been named Executive Assistant at LPEA, reporting directly to LPEA CEO Mike Dreyspring.

Charistopoulos comes to LPEA from the La Plata County Economic Development Alliance, where she served in an administrative capacity for two years, working with Executive Director Roger Zalternaitis and the Alliance Board of Directors.

"I had the opportunity to be mentored by very big thinkers," says Charistopoulos, noting her experience there attracted her to LPEA. "I confirmed that I'm very mission-driven, and it's important to me to be part of something that's much bigger than I am."

A graduate of Indiana University in Bloomington, with a double major of Criminal Justice and African American Studies, Charistopoulos enjoys a varied professional background including positions in the restaurant, retail and construction industries. Shortly after arriving in Durango 12 years ago, she also became actively involved, donating her time as a volunteer with the Durango Independent Film Festival (DIFF). For the past nearly eight years she has served as Volunteer Coordinator for DIFF.

"LPEA is a phenomenal organization," says Charistopoulos. "My opportunities over the years have allowed me to grow into the person I am today to work for this company, this CEO and this team of people that make up LPEA."

New faces in LPEA Operations

LPEA welcomes additions to the Operations Department: Dusti Riggs as Apprentice Dispatcher and Trey Buffalo as Equipment Operator.

Riggs, who has served as a Meter Reader Collector for LPEA since 2006, has entered the two-year intensive Apprentice Dispatcher program. The Dispatch team oversees LPEA's system operations, monitoring power flows and voltage, fielding calls when problems occur within LPEA's service area, trouble-shooting outages and dispatching crews to restore power.

Riggs has been involved with the electric utility business since her junior year in high school in Pahrump, Nev. She worked part time for the cooperative Valley Electric Association and when she graduated from high school was offered a full time job as an apparatus and testing specialist. After five years in this position, she moved on to purchasing, learning that aspect of the industry.

Having worked in construction with heavy equipment for the past nearly eight years, new Equipment Operator Trey Buffalo comes to LPEA from Crossfire LLC, provider of oil and gas construction services. Born and raised in Salida, Colo., he is also an auctioneer and avid rodeo team roper.

As Equipment Operator, Buffalo works with the line crews, assisting in construction and repair of LPEA's lines in the field.



Dusti Riggs



Trey Buffalo

LPEA launches Wellness Committee

To help foster a happy and healthy workplace, enhancing collaborations, partnerships and communications among all employees, LPEA has initiated a Wellness Committee, including employees [pictured LtoR] Amanda Miles, Rachel Gilman, Nancy Andrews, Nadine Ontiveros, Aubrey Gillespie and Ashley Tokarczyk. [Wellness Committee members not pictured: Justin Barnum, Steve Gregg and Darrick Robinson.]



Photo: Ray Pierotti

"I personally am involved with the wellness team because I believe a team of people dedicated to working intentionally on organizational culture can make a significant difference to all aspects of an organization," says Human Resources Administrator Ontiveros. "A wellness team's first goal is to support the mission of the organization, and a wellness team is also a wonderful way for all of us to enhance professional and leadership skills."

To that end, the committee has initiated a number of activities, including "Pink Thursdays" as part of Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October, and a "Wellfie" competition, where employees took "selfies" of themselves engaged in healthy activities. A Book Club for employees to promote personal/professional growth and a Thanksgiving potluck are in the planning stages. At the Thanksgiving potluck the "Thankful Chain" project will also be launched.

"The goal of the Thankful Chain is to create a physical chain - whether that's paper messages, photographs, symbols or anything significant to the employee - citing things we are thankful for and see if we can make it long enough to line the halls from the kitchen, through accounting, finance, engineering, all the way to operations," says Ontiveros, referencing the entire office space at LPEA's Durango headquarters.

"The core, the heart of LPEA is its people," says CEO Mike Dreyspring. "Our new Wellness Committee is keeping the 'heart' healthy, and that benefits the entire membership."

LIVE WIRES

Board meets

Nov. 18, 9 a.m.

The next meeting of the LPEA Board of Directors is set for Wednesday, Nov. 18, 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.

"Fill the Bucket" with food for those in need

The LPEA team in Pagosa Springs will once again host the "Fill the Bucket" Food Drive, Sat., Nov. 14, 8 a.m.-2 p.m. at TWO Archuleta locations: City Market and Hometown Food Market. Help support Archuleta County's food banks!

Happy Thanksgiving

LPEA's offices in Durango and Pagosa Springs will be closed Nov. 26-27 in celebration of the Thanksgiving holiday.

Want to be a Board member?

As a cooperative, LPEA is governed by a Board of Directors elected by the membership. Those interested in running for the Board in spring 2016 are encouraged to begin learning more about the cooperative now. The LPEA website, www.lpea.coop holds an abundance of information.



Directors' Report Update from your LPEA Board

BY MICHAEL RENDON | LPEA BOARD PRESIDENT | MRENDON@LPEA.COOP

Greetings! As we wind down 2015, I thought this would be a good time to update our members on progress being made by your LPEA Board of Directors.

In the July 2015 edition of *Colorado Country Life*, our CEO Mike Dreyspring noted that the Board was in the process of implementing our Strategic Plan, and that it would be available to our members on our website. It is now there for your review at www.lpea.coop. Access your SmartHub account to reach the plan.

Essentially, the Strategic Plan has four "macro" areas of focus: Communications, Board and Employee Development, LPEA's Relationship with Tri-State, and Technology Innovation. Drilling down, it identifies specific objectives or initiatives related to safety, succession planning, energy efficiency, power quality and supply, risk management, and upcoming distributive generation technologies, and more. It's an on-going and fluid process.

Rates are always a primary focus for us. LPEA Board Vice President Tom Compton and LPEA staff sat on a Tri-State rate design committee, which has developed a new rate structure that is more fair and equitable for our members. The Board and staff are now in the rate design process and this new rate settlement with Tri-State will

have a significant impact on how we structure our rates [what you pay on your bills] for 2016.

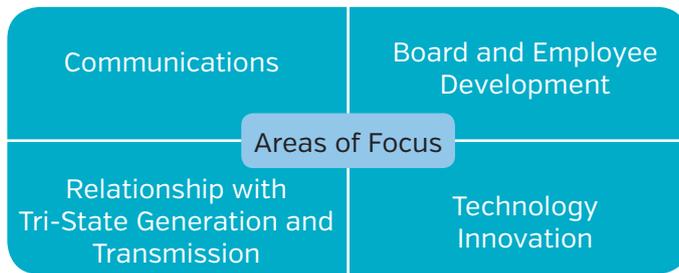
Regarding energy efficiency, LPEA staff members are working on an "On-bill financing" process that will allow our members to receive loans to make energy efficiency improvements to their homes or businesses. Additionally, will soon be scrutinizing all of our energy efficiency programs to determine those that help our members the most.

With alternative energy, LPEA continues discussions on a variety of community projects including solar, biomass, and geothermal. We're evaluating our first round of Community Solar Gardens and debating what a second round would look like. Also, we're working with "Solarize Archuleta" to facilitate solar installation for our members in Archuleta County.

LPEA's Board and staff are in the early stages of creating a Member Survey to get feedback from you on a variety of issues. We hope to garner a greater understanding of how to best communicate and reach you, what programs you would like to see offered by LPEA, and how we can work with you to continue to provide safe and reliable electricity.

Finally, your Board continues its own education. We have recently toured the Tacoma hydro-power plant on the Animas River to get a better perspective on our system and history. Also, a majority of the Board will be in Denver this month taking classes provided by the Colorado Rural Electric Association (CREA) plus tour and meet with key Tri-State staff to build a better relationship with our major power supplier.

That's it for now. Our board meetings are every third Wednesday starting at 9 a.m. at LPEA headquarters in Durango. Everyone is always welcome.



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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:
Michael Rendón, President [District 3]
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Jeff Berman, Secretary [District 3]
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Bob Formwalt [District 1]
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Bob Lynch [District 1]
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Davin Montoya [District 2]
Jack Turner [District 4]
Joe Wheeling [District 4]

Chief Executive Officer:
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.

