

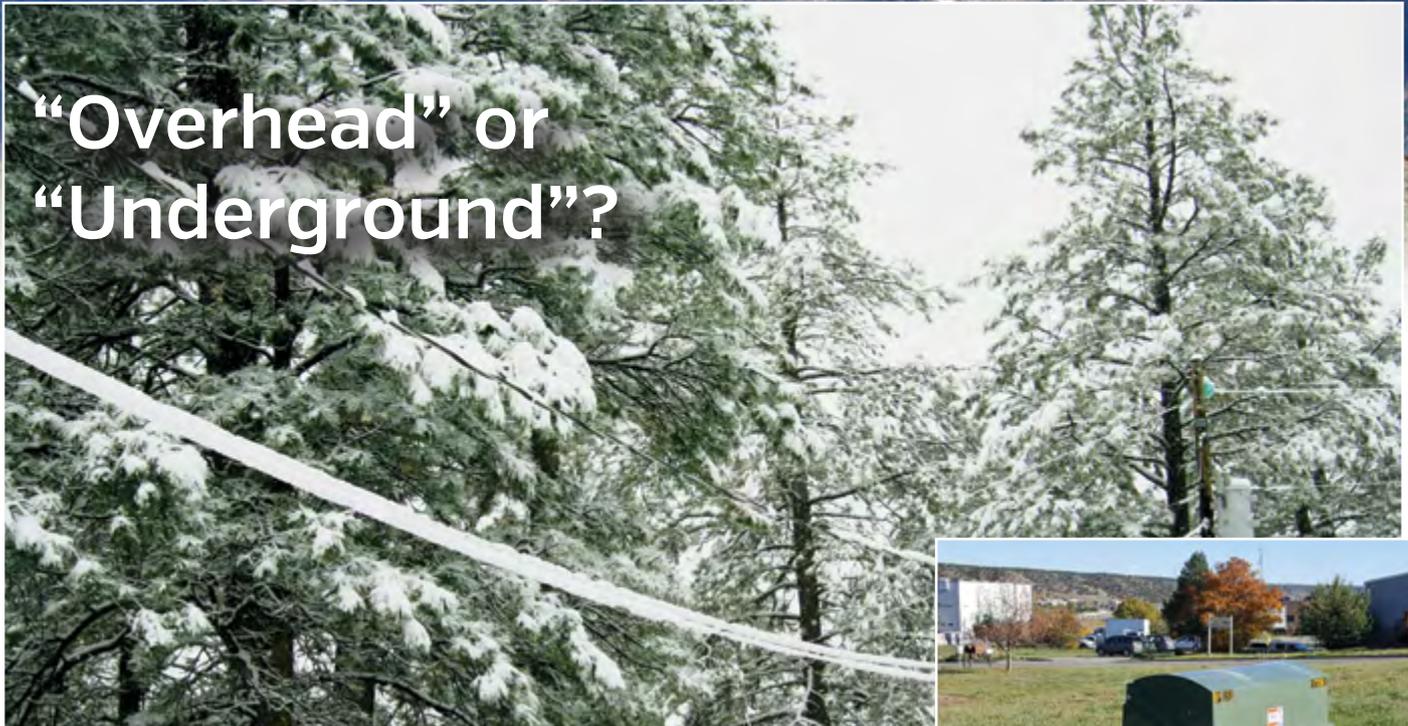
WATT'S UP

AT LA PLATA ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION
NOVEMBER 2016

LPEA

La Plata Electric Association, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy Company



“Overhead” or “Underground”?

Each year, a couple questions tend to be asked by our members when heavy snow storms impact LPEA's electrical system: “Why are my lights blinking?” and “Why did that outage last so long?”

“Typically, when we hear one of those questions, before we ever know the location of the residence, we can tell whether they have overhead or underground lines serving their home,” says Justin Talbot, manager of operations.

In short, when residents experience blinking during or following a snow storm, it's likely that the snow was heavy and wet, and it adhered to *overhead* wires. When the snow builds up and falls from the lines, the wires bounce and can interact with each other or nearby trees. When automated devices detect a problem, they momentarily cut the power then re-energize. Sometimes this occurs several times, thus “the blinks.”

“If there really is an obstruction on the line, the power will remain off until we clear it or make repairs,” says Curt Marlatt, manager of lines and services. “It's a fail-safe in the system to prevent further damage or fire.”

Some areas of LPEA's service territory have *underground* lines, and while they generally don't experience blinks because of snow discharge, a fault in the underground system can occur at any time.

“Unfortunately, our system can't exactly pin-point an underground fault,” says Marlatt, noting with an underground fault, the operations team employs an organized process to isolate the problem to a specified

segment of wire, but that takes time.

“And think about it,” adds Talbot, “if there's six feet of snow piled on top of that line, our crews need to go in – sometimes via snowcat – and first remove snow before any diagnosis or repairs can be made. Outages thus last longer.”

Therein lies part of the conundrum of “overhead or underground.” With overhead lines, construction is straight-forward, faster, and when damage occurs, it's easy to spot and less expensive to repair. But, the overhead lines are less visually attractive and more susceptible to damage from the weather or vehicle collisions.

On the other hand, while underground lines don't impact views and aren't vulnerable to trees falling, vehicle collision or weather (though snowplows can damage underground junction boxes), they are more susceptible to flooding and dig-ins during construction, more expensive to build and repair, and, as mentioned, it's more difficult to find faults.

“The system is, of course, all interconnected,” says Talbot. “If we have a ‘big’ winter with significant, wet snow, both overhead and underground parts of the system could be impacted. But at LPEA we're ready for winter. Maintenance has been proactive and with our new technology, we do look forward to responding more quickly for any weather-related outages.”

Director Lyon earns credentials

LPEA board member Doug Lyon, Ph.D., representing members of District 3 (Durango), has completed the required courses and earned his Credentialed Cooperative Director (CCD) certificate from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

“Education is the cornerstone of effective self-governance, and LPEA’s members are best served by directors who are well-versed in democratic principles and who understand the industry and how this industry can move forward to meet changing demands,” says Mike Dreyspring, LPEA CEO. “Today’s electric utility environment imposes new demands on electric cooperative directors, particularly increased knowledge of changes in the electric utility business, new governance skills and a working knowledge of the cooperative principles. We applaud Doug for his commitment.”

Former Durango City Councilor and Mayor, Lyon was elected to the LPEA Board of Directors in May 2016 and took a concentrated approach to completing all CCD courses this past summer. He is currently a Professor of Management at Fort Lewis College.

The NRECA Credentialed Cooperative Director program requires attendance and demonstrated understanding of the basic competencies contained in five core courses:

- Director Duties and Liabilities
- Understanding the Electric Business
- Board Roles and Relationships
- Strategic Planning
- Financial Decision Making

“The NRECA director trainings are very well-done and informative,” says Lyon. “Since the electric utility industry is both complex and rapidly changing, I felt that it was important to get up to speed as quickly as possible. I look forward to completing the next set of training courses.”



Manage electricity usage!

LPEA will host a new workshop, “Introduction to SmartHub,” Thursday, Nov. 10, Noon to 1 p.m., at LPEA’s Durango headquarters, 45 Stewart St. (Bodo Park). Lunch will be served.

SmartHub is an on-line tool to assist members with managing their accounts, as well as help them understand their electricity usage and save energy and possibly dollars. SmartHub can be accessed through LPEA’s web site or via App on mobile devices. The workshop, presented by Energy Management Advisor Nancy Andrews and Project Specialist Sue Maxwell, will explore all the features and how to maximize benefits.

“Technology has enabled us to offer this service,” says Andrews, who works with members on energy efficiency efforts and conservation. “It’s often very valuable for our members to be able to see ‘when’ they used electricity and understand why their bill might have spiked. Information can help with understanding how to lower your bills.”

Andrews and Maxwell will walk through SmartHub on the large screens in LPEA’s board room, but members are also encouraged to bring their laptops, tablets or mobile phones and explore their individual SmartHub accounts during the workshop. LPEA offers guest wi-fi for connectivity.

All LPEA members are invited to attend. Because lunch will be served, those interested in attending are asked to RSVP to Andrews at nanadrews@lpea.coop [preferred] or 970.382.7775.

Funds support non-profits

In an effort to make good use of idle funds left abandoned by former LPEA members as unclaimed Capital Credits, the cooperative’s Board of Directors awarded seven new Educational/Special Project Grants totaling \$29,369 to non-profit entities in its service territory.

- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Archuleta County – \$2,720 – for facility support.
- Breen Community Center – \$6,500 – for facility upgrades.
- SMART Collaboration Program – \$5,000 – for its mentorship program.
- Durango Education Center – \$4,300 – for facility upgrades.
- Manna Soup Kitchen – \$2,829 – for the Student Food Program.
- Alternative Horizons – \$2,500 – for its Legal Assistance Program.
- TARA Historical Society – \$5,520 – for facility support.

Capital Credits are in essence LPEA’s margins or revenues remaining after all expenses have been paid. Annually, the electricity payments made by members in excess of the cost to provide their electric service is placed into a patronage capital account in each member’s name. When the cooperative is able, Capital Credits are returned to members.

The dollars become “unclaimed” when LPEA cannot find members deserving of the refund. The board has determined that these unclaimed funds should be invested in the community and thus established the Educational/Special Project Grants program.

LPEA “starring” on DurangoTV

To further reach out to members with information of importance, LPEA will begin twice-monthly reports during the DurangoTV news, which airs on Durango Cable Channel 15, as well as MeTV on cable and satellite throughout the region. The segments can also be accessed online at www.DurangoTV.com.

In November’s installments [Nov. 10 and 24], CEO Mike Dreyspring will introduce viewers to LPEA’s new On-bill Financing Program for energy efficiency improvements, as well as the up-coming changes to the cooperative’s new Time-of-Use program.

Following views on the public airwaves, LPEA’s television segments will be available on the cooperative’s website, YouTube channel and more.

Help LPEA “Fill the Bucket”

Responding to community needs in advance of the holidays, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers [Local IBEW 111 26A], of LPEA will host the 9th Annual “Fill the Bucket” food drive, Saturday, Nov. 19, 2016, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

LPEA personnel and the “bucket trucks” will be at both City Market and Hometown Food Market in Pagosa Springs to collect non-perishable food items [canned goods or boxed/bagged dry goods]. Donated food will be distributed to community food banks in Archuleta County.

“We really love doing this every year, helping support our community,” says Pagosa Fleet Mechanic Jeremy Gurule, who is assisting in coordinating the event. “Everything is expensive these days, and the need continues to grow, so we want to help people stock their pantries for this coming winter.”

Cash donations for the food banks are also welcomed, and donors can make arrangements to give directly by calling Gurule at 970.317.0496, or bring a donation by the LPEA office in Pagosa Springs [603 S. 8th St.]. Checks can be made payable to the IBEW Local 111 Brotherhood Fund. All donated funds will be distributed to the food banks.

For further information regarding the “Fill the Bucket” food drive, contact Jeremy Gurule, 970.317.0496.



Watch for the bucket trucks!

CO-OP MEMBERS

Ask...

Q: My Electric Thermal Storage [ETS] heater used to display a “C” for charging all day on Sunday. It’s not anymore, should I be concerned?

A: No. As we prepare for the Jan. 1, 2017, transition to additional off-peak hours, your meter will be replaced with one that can accommodate the new hours and control features. Note that beginning January 1, your ETS heaters may come on up to 2 hours after off-peak hours begin. However, due to the expanded off-peak hours, your heater will have the same number of hours to charge during the day. On Sundays, your heaters will be controlled the same as the other 6 days of the week, but rest assured, all energy used on Sundays will be billed at the off-peak rate.

LIVE WIRES

Board meeting Nov. 16, 9 a.m.

The next LPEA Board meeting is Wednesday, Nov. 16, 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 Board meeting. New rates for 2017 will be approved at this meeting.

Last chance for Sight-In Days

The final two days for hunters to sight their scopes during Sight-In Days at the Durango Gun Club outdoor range are Thursday and Friday, Nov. 3 and 4, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The free opportunity, open to all hunters, is courtesy LPEA.

Happy Thanksgiving

LPEA’s offices in Durango and Pagosa Springs will be closed Nov. 24-25 in celebration of the Thanksgiving holiday.

Round Up Grants

The following organizations received Round Up and Educational grants, distributed by the Round Up Board of Directors, in September: Friends of the San Juans, Gold Star Parents Weekend, Be Frank, Pine Tree Youth Circle, Silver Spruce Academy, Durango Nature Studies and Ignacio Elementary School.

LPEA Time-of-Use: Only Getting Better

BY DAN HARMS | MANAGER OF RATES, TECHNOLOGY AND ENERGY POLICY
DHARMS@LPEA.COOP



Some say that true win-win deals are hard to come by and that one side often receives greater benefit than the other. LPEA's Time-of-Use (TOU) program is an exception to this.

In October, you read what it means for LPEA to be a co-op and how our savings go to you, our members, not toward corporate profit. This speaks exactly to the core of how our TOU program works. LPEA's TOU program encourages you to move your use of electricity from periods of heavy usage (when many members are necessarily using lots of electricity) to periods of lower usage (when demand for electricity is less) through separate on-peak and off-peak pricing.

LPEA's TOU program is known nationally as one of the most successful programs of its kind. Last year, our TOU members

saved more than \$1.2 million. This member savings exists because LPEA saved \$1.2 million through reduced wholesale purchased power expense and reduced the need for LPEA to upgrade its wires to meet peak demands. Definitely a win-win deal!

In 2017, LPEA will significantly enhance our TOU programs. We are happy to announce that for residential and small commercial TOU members, off-peak hours (the lower cost time periods) are being increased by 33 percent.

Beginning Jan. 1, the new off-peak hours for general service members will be 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Saturday, and all day Sunday, Christmas and Thanksgiving. This means morning on-peak hours are only 6 a.m. to 9 a.m.

LPEA is able to offer these expanded off-peak hours because new technology now allows large loads that come on during off-peak hours, such as ETS heaters and water heaters, to be brought on more gradually. These controlled heaters will still have the same ample time to charge as they've

had under the old hours, but since we can stagger the charging times, we can better manage the flow of electricity, and, again, it's a win-win for your electric cooperative and our members.

LPEA will also improve its TOU program for our large commercial members. Due to the nature of large commercial loads and how they impact LPEA's system, their hours are different. Starting Jan. 1, the new off-peak hours for large commercial members will be 8 p.m. to 2 p.m., and all day Sunday, Christmas and Thanksgiving. The only on-peak hours will be 2 p.m. to 8 p.m., Monday through Saturday.

Even with the design of LPEA's current TOU rates (before the 2017 shift), when you transition from the standard rate, you can experience a slight savings without even trying to change your usage to off-peak hours. Ultimately, however, the more usage you can shift, the more you can save. Sometimes as much as 40 percent on your electric bill.

If you haven't already done so, sign up to give Time-of-Use a try and make it a win-win for you as well as your cooperative.

Mailing Address:
PO Box 2750 Durango, CO 81302-2750

Street Address:
45 Stewart St. Durango, CO 81303
603 S. 8th St. Pagosa Springs, CO 81147

970.247.5786 | www.lpea.coop

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.

