



Photo credit: Jeanne Dittmar

ALL our members matter

Customer Service is about caring for the customer

*W*e're all about our dogs, aren't we? Even at LPEA. Can't have our pups be out of power. Too bad they can't pay the electric bills!

Though line crews brave the elements to maintain the electric system, there's a team of dedicated employees that embraces a different but equally vital challenge: handling customer service.

In person, on the phone, and via email, LPEA's Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) are typically the first member contact. Not only must this team of dedicated employees be well-versed in all services and products offered by the co-op, they must have the patience of saints. Days can be hectic. All are kept on their toes.

"The CSRs have to have extensive knowledge of billing to answer questions, and basic knowledge of everything else that happens in this company/industry," says Betsy Lovelace, customer service supervisor. "Everyone should be impressed with what all these folks need to keep top of mind to serve our members day to day."

Indeed, no two days are identical and every call is unique for the CSRs. A day could begin with explaining the process for net metering a potential solar system, followed by handling a line locate (call before you dig) request, to discussion of energy efficiency. Plus, no one

can predict when an outage – small or large – will impact lives on any given day. Multiple situations often occur at one time.

"For our team the most rewarding part of the job is helping members understand their account and helping them find ways to improve their usage of electricity," says Lovelace. "We all also love being able to help someone who is challenged with paying their bill; you calm them down and give them some peace."

"The CSRs are hardworking individuals with families with bills to pay just like everyone else," says Jerry Wills, district manager, Pagosa Springs. "They care about each and every member. All our members should be grateful for these great people."

Working at the local electric company may seem to be uneventful, but many, many things go on behind the scenes to ensure reliable electric service throughout Archuleta and La Plata counties. The CSRs need to be up on it all and ready at a moment's notice to shift gears – all for the benefit of the cooperative and its member/customers.

"I am tremendously proud of this great team," says Ron Meier, manager of engineering and member relations. "These people are conscientious and smart – the very best of the best. Each day brings a different challenge, but I know there is nothing that this team can't handle, and they always do it with sincerity and a smile."

Fire prevention

With current and pending future dry conditions, as well as 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.

"Safety is a number one priority for LPEA and our crews," says Justin Talbot, manager of operations. "We are being pro-active. What this may mean is that, with our safety steps and checks, in the event of an outage, it will take us a little longer to restore power, and we hope our members will understand."

At a location where line/equipment damage has prompted an outage, linemen will do extra patrols of the affected section of line to make certain no other flammable objects are touching the electrical equipment. Only then will the all-clear be given and the line re-energized. The linemen will then remain at the location to ensure no embers are smoldering. Also, all vehicles are equipped with watering systems to douse any sparked fires.

LPEA has line personnel on stand-by throughout the night – one Journeyman Lineman each in Durango, Bayfield/Ignacio and Pagosa Springs.

"We're also asking our customers to be aware – be our eyes," says Curt Marlatt, line superintendent. "If you've got an outage, go outside and survey your property, as well as your neighbors', for downed power lines, smoke or a visible fire. If you see anything, call 9-1-1 immediately – then call LPEA at 970.247.5786, and please stay away from all downed powerlines."

The Annual Meeting... The Heart of Your Power

Election results... a complimentary lunch... news about your electric cooperative... door prizes... test drive an electric vehicle... all part of the LPEA Annual Meeting, set for Saturday, May 12 at Sky Ute Casino and Resort, Ignacio. Registration begins at 9 a.m., with the business meeting set to start at 10:30 a.m.

"It's the one time during the year that our membership can join together, see friends and neighbors and learn more about your rural electric cooperative that is truly part of everything you do," says CEO Mike Dreyspring.

Presentations during the LPEA Annual Meeting will include reports from CEO Dreyspring, Board President Davin Montoya, Treasurer Doug Lyon, Attorney Shay Denning, and CREA Representative Karen Barger. An update on happenings at Tri-State Generation and Transmission will be presented.

Election results in four districts are expected to be announced prior to the complimentary lunch. In accordance with LPEA's bylaws, annually one seat in each of LPEA's four districts comes up for election.

Candidates in District 1 (Archuleta County) are incumbent Bob Formwalt and challenger Kirsten Skeehan; District 2 (south and west La Plata County) incumbent Kohler McInnis and challenger Jeffery Mannix; District 3 (City of Durango) incumbent Britt Bassett and challenger Gene Fisher; District 4 (north and east La Plata County) incumbent Karen Barger and challenger Tim Wheeler.

Learn more at www.lpea.coop or call 970.247.5786 with any questions.



LPEA Board President Davin Montoya addresses members during the 2017 Annual Meeting.

Rock the vote!

- If voting by mail, mail early to ensure delivery.
- Ballots may be delivered in person up to 4 p.m. Friday, May 11 at LPEA's offices; La Plata County Clerk; Bayfield Town Hall, and Farmer's Fresh Market in Ignacio.
- Vote in person at the Annual Meeting prior to 10:30 a.m. [Ballots will not be accepted after 10:30 a.m.]

New ambulance in Archuleta

To support rural community members and make good use of idle funds left abandoned by former members of LPEA as unclaimed Capital Credits, the cooperative's board of directors awarded \$10,000 to the Upper San Juan Health Service District, dba Pagosa Springs Medical Center.

The Special Project Grant funds will be used to support the district's matching grant resources for purchase of a new Medical Emergency Transport Vehicle (ambulance) to serve residents of Archuleta County.

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.

Mortensen named Serviceman

Journeyman Lineman Ty Mortensen has been named as a Serviceman at LPEA, based out of the Durango office.

In the electric utility industry, a serviceman focuses on direct work with customers, upgrading electrical systems, setting meters, and working with local electricians. LPEA's servicemen are also on-call for outages and are the first in the field, troubleshooting the cause of an outage and determining next steps for restoration of power.

Inspired by his uncle, a lineman for Xcel Energy, Mortensen attended Mesa Hotline School in Grand Junction, Colo. Following his graduation in 2013 he was accepted into LPEA's Lineman Apprenticeship program, and he successfully completed the four-year intensive training and earned his Journeyman Lineman Certification in 2017. During his tenure at LPEA, he has been part of the crews responsible for constructing and maintaining electric power distribution lines and facilities in LPEA's service territory.

Mortensen was born and raised in Alamosa, Colo., and is the grandson of the family who owned Lori's Family Dining locations in Durango. He is an avid athlete, as well as an Eagle Scout - early training that has served him well in his career development as a Lineman.



Riggs earns Dispatcher position



After completing the two-year Apprentice Dispatch program, Dusti Riggs has earned full status as a Dispatcher at La Plata Electric Association (LPEA).

LPEA's Dispatch team oversees LPEA's system operations. Dispatchers monitor power flows and voltage, field calls when problems occur within LPEA's service area, trouble-shoot outages and dispatch crews to restore power.

Riggs, who had served as a Meter Reader Collector for LPEA since 2006, entered the intensive Apprentice Dispatcher program in 2015. She has since served as part of the Dispatch team during her apprenticeship, and has been involved in the continued technology updates at LPEA, including enhanced Outage Management System, improving communications with crews in the field as well as LPEA members.

Riggs has been involved in 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.

"Working in Dispatch can be intense because we take our responsibility to keep the system operating very seriously, and if there are outages, we want to get everyone safely back in power as quickly as we can," said Riggs. "It is a very rewarding job to serve our members."

LPEA Golf Tourney next month!

As has become tradition, the IBEW Local 111 Unit 26A "Brotherhood" in Archuleta County will once again host the La Plata Electric Golf Tournament, Saturday, June 16 at the Pagosa Springs Golf Club.

Proceeds will benefit ASPIRE Medical Services and Education.

To participate as a Hole Sponsor, or field a team (first come, limit 34), contact Garrett Hammer, 970.946.9434 or Jeremy Matney, 970.759.8881.



LIVE WIRES

Board meeting May 16

The next meeting of the LPEA Board of Directors is set for Wednesday, May 16, 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.

LPEA offices closed

In honor of Memorial Day, LPEA offices in Durango and Pagosa Springs will be closed on Monday, May 28.

Round Up Grants

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

- TRIO Student Center at FLC
- Durango Community After Prom Association
- Cloudbusters Rocket Team - Animas High School
- The Liberty School
- La Plata Family Centers Coalition supporting Bayfield Afterschool and Summer Enrichment programs
- Pagosa Elementary School supporting Stepping Stones Experiential and Adventure Learning Program
- Women's Resource Center





From the President YOU are invited

BY DAVIN MONTOYA | BOARD PRESIDENT | DMONTOYA@LPEA.COOP

We all seem to be very busy these days, but I want to invite all our member-owners to slow down a bit, take some time and remember what a great thing it is to be part of a rural electric cooperative. Come visit with your friends and neighbors at your LPEA Annual Meeting, Saturday, May 12. We're celebrating your rural electric cooperative as "the heart of your power." LPEA is not only your electricity provider, we've got a lot of people – your friends and neighbors – who work diligently to serve you.

We're returning to the Sky Ute Casino and Resort in Ignacio. In addition to the event center being a great venue, it's about as centralized as we can get in LPEA's service territory. We hope many of our members will be able to attend. There's plenty of parking, and we'll have golf cart shuttles to make everything easier. Remember that the event center is located at the back of the campus, so go past the casino entrance. I always remember it as being adjacent to the Rolling Thunder Bowling Alley.

Registration opens at 9 a.m., and as always we'll have a continental breakfast for you. The business meeting starts at 10:30 a.m. And the buffet lunch, courtesy of LPEA and catered by the Sky Ute Resort, follows at about noon.

As you hopefully know, we're in the midst of an election in all four of our LPEA districts. You should have received your election packet in the mail, and if you haven't yet voted, be sure to consider the candidates carefully and mail your ballot early to ensure it arrives by May 11 at the La Plata County Clerk's office (remember mail goes to Albuquerque and takes two days or more!). Every single vote counts.

Of importance with your voting this year is review of ten Bylaw revisions. The Bylaws

are the guiding principles of LPEA, and your Board members and the staff refer to them regularly. As you might imagine, time passes, things change, and what was valid years ago, isn't necessarily appropriate now. So we're taking the opportunity of this current election cycle to update issues and polish some language. We need approval of the membership to make changes to the Bylaws. Your current Board of Directors recommends a "yes" vote on all ten Bylaw questions.

A detailed version of the suggested Bylaw revisions, as well as a review of all the Board candidates, is available at www.lpea.coop.

If you miss the mail, you can bring your ballot to the Annual Meeting, but arrive early to register and submit your ballot before the meeting officially starts to ensure that your vote is counted. The election results will be announced by the end of the meeting.

During the business meeting we will share important information about your cooperative, as well as report on the company's financial performance over the last year and discuss the challenges of providing reliable power at the lowest reasonable cost, while remaining environmentally responsible.

Remember, if you register at the meeting, you'll receive a \$5 credit on your electric bill plus a special gift – and be eligible for a wide variety of door prizes.

So I hope to see you there. You are ALL the heart of LPEA's power.



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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Board of Directors:
Davin Montoya, President [District 2]
Bob Lynch, Vice President [District 1]
Karen Barger, Secretary [District 4]
Doug Lyon, Treasurer [District 3]
Mike Alley [District 1]
Britt Bassett [District 3]
Bob Formwalt [District 1]
Dan Huntington [District 2]
Rachel Landis [District 3]
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Michael A. Dreyspring