

WATT'S UP

AT LA PLATA ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

LPEA

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

FEBRUARY 2017

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

Report an outage via SmartHub!

LPEA employees work daily to help ensure that outages are rare. But when wet winter storms (and lightning in the summer) affect electrical equipment, the team goes into action.

"Knowledge is power, no pun intended," says CEO Mike Dreyspring. "My goal here is to help our members understand more about how they can help us with communications during an outage.

LPEA operates a 24-hour Dispatch Center, which monitors a nearly 3,400 square mile service territory. The new AMI (Automated Metering Infrastructure) assists in alerting Dispatch of outages on any given segment of line, but direct member reporting still plays an important role.

"We likely already know that you're out of power," says Dan Harms, manager of rates, technology and energy policy. "But every additional piece of information is helpful. Oftentimes members provide us with messages regarding damage they see, which is something our AMI system cannot do."

After hours, typically only one Dispatcher is staffing the Center, and if it's a significant outage, that Dispatcher is diagnosing the problem(s) and directing Line Crews to the source of the outage(s). Priority is getting the power restored.

"They can't necessarily answer the phone," says Dreyspring. "And when voicemail messages back up, Dispatchers rely on automated systems to match phone calls to a location on LPEA's system."

When members call in an outage – which is still recommended – the automated Outage Management System (OMS) will provide information about a known outage IF the OMS recognizes the in-coming phone number. For this reason, members are asked to update their phone numbers with LPEA. The system can hold up to three numbers, including cell phones.

"The OMS system will also allow callers to enter their account number, which is a more reliable means to identify the right location," says Harms. "Another option for reporting an outage – providing you've charged your



mobile device – is to log into the LPEA SmartHub app which also provides a reliable means for pinpointing the right location."

SmartHub is LPEA's on-line service for account management, but it also is an efficient method for reporting outages. From a regular desktop, log into www.lpea.coop and click on the SmartHub icon. The "Report an Outage" is in the top, right-hand corner.

For those utilizing the SmartHub app on their phones or tablets, click on "Service Status." Any known outage updates will be noted, or members can automatically alert LPEA's OMS – and thus the Dispatch Center – that they're out of power.

"We still request that our members update their phone numbers," says Dreyspring. "We keep our members' information confidential. The numbers are used to help us serve you better."

Providing "reliable" electricity is part of LPEA's mission, and the co-op endeavors to continually enhance its services to members.

Invest in LEDs with On-bill Financing

While the price for energy efficient LED light bulbs continues to drop (and the technology is improving), investing in a full home or business retrofit can still be an expensive proposition. But LPEA can help.

LED light bulbs (and the cost to hire any labor to install fixtures or bulbs), can be financed through LPEA's On-bill Financing Program. Through the program, customers-in-good-standing, with an established LPEA credit rating, could receive a low interest loan for up to \$7,500 (for any energy efficiency project – not just LEDs), and repay the loan monthly on the electric bill. Payments can be spread out over a 5-year period.

“Depending on how conscientious you are about ‘turning off the lights,’ lighting can account for 20-40 percent of a residential electric bill,” says Project Specialist Ray Pierotti, “so investing in LED bulbs, which consume about one-third of the traditional incandescent, starts saving dollars on your bill almost immediately.”

Investing in a complete retrofit at one-time, taking advantage of the On-bill Financing, kick-starts the energy savings, and that savings ostensibly balances out the monthly loan payment. Then the established energy savings continues on long after the loan is repaid.

Further, LPEA also offers rebates for new LED purchase - \$8 per bulb or 50 percent of the materials charge – which reduces the upfront cost, with or without the On-Bill Financing loan.

“So you can get a check back in the mail when you invest in LEDs,” adds Pierotti, noting that members need to follow all requirements on the rebate application. “This is great for homeowners, but the rebate combined with the loan can truly help small businesses, which have the lights on sometimes 24 hours per day, convert to LEDs. No matter how you look at it, it’s a win-win for our members.”

Learn more about On-bill Financing and the rebates for LED light bulbs at www.lpea.coop or call 970.247.5786.



General Manager Asa Robbins amid the lights and the bikes at the new 2nd Ave. Sports.

The bikes (and skis and gear) are lit at 2nd Ave. Sports

A bit of a Phoenix from the ashes...except there was no fire, just demolition of the old buildings at the corner of E. 2nd Ave. and College, and the first shining new example of energy efficiency and renewable technology rising with the new 2nd Ave. Sports.

“The owners of the business wanted to push for something like this because why wouldn’t we want energy efficiency in our lighting. Why wouldn’t we want a solar field,” says Asa Robbins, 2nd Ave. Sports general manager. “Ideally the building should be more forward-thinking and that was the big push.”

LPEA’s Project Specialist Ray Pierotti doesn’t often get the opportunity to work with new commercial construction, but when a business contacts him, he jumps on the chance to advise – because it means savings in the long run.

“I’m able to talk them through their needs and address issues right up front,” says Pierotti. “For example, 2nd Ave. Sports has a great industrial look, so the LED overhead lights are great, but they’ve also got key merchandise, so we mixed that with spotlights which make the colors of the skis and jackets and more ‘pop.’”

“Also for our mechanics, the LEDs light the work areas much more effectively,” said Robbins. “The white light takes a little bit of getting used to, but it works great.”

While the up-front investment was significant to install all LEDs – a total job cost of \$90,000 – 2nd Ave. Sports received a substantial rebate of \$6,682 from LPEA for the effort, and the store began saving immediately on its electric bill.

“Given the projected kilowatt hours used in the new building, since they went with LEDs we can project an 8,910 watt reduction in annual usage, which can be estimated in a savings of about \$4,450 in electricity costs over what they’d have paid with conventional lighting,” says Pierotti.

Additionally, since the business also installed a roof-top solar PV array, sized to match the energy consumption, the company is looking at net-neutral on the electric bill.

“That is one message we always want to send to our members looking to install solar,” says Pierotti. “Do all your energy efficiency measures first, and then size your solar array to match your consumption. It’s a great equation.”

2nd Ave. Sports at 640 E. 2nd Ave., Durango, is a full-service ski, snowboard and bike shop. Take a virtual tour at www.2ndavesports.com (and be sure to check out the lights).

Tunisian engineering student interning at LPEA

Rihab Ammar, a Fort Lewis College exchange student from Tunisia, has joined LPEA as an intern as she completes her degree in engineering.

Fluent in Arabic, French, English and Spanish, Ammar was chosen for a full scholarship to attend Fort Lewis College through the Thomas Jefferson Scholarship Program's Tunisia Undergraduate Scholarship Program, a program of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and implemented by IREX. As part of the scholarship requirements, she must have an internship in her academic field of choice, which in Tunisia is "power and energy."

So La Plata Electric is the ultimate as a choice for me," says Ammar. LPEA staff is working with her to explore a variety of possibilities to expand her education, especially as it relates to renewable energy.

Ammar attends the National Engineering School of Monastir, an institution that required rigorous examination prior to her acceptance. Early on she excelled in mathematics, physics and biology, which might have propelled her into medicine, but instead she embraced her fascination with electrical engineering.

"In classes we mainly get the theoretic, and now here I'm trying to apply what I have learned to discover the professional aspect of being an engineer," says Ammar. "For the rest of the period, I'll have a focus – a project – that I can have a report on."

Ammar will intern at LPEA through the end of the Fort Lewis spring semester, at which time she hopes all credits transfer and she can graduate from the engineering college in Tunisia.

"I'm really grateful that they chose Durango," says Ammar of the IREX process of selecting schools to suit the students. "I'm in love with this place and the community."

She is engaged to be married this summer, and will live in Japan as her soon-to-be husband finishes his PhD in engineering. The couple will then move to Germany for his employment, where she hopes to pursue her advanced engineering degree and/or work in the field of renewable energy.

"I will be studying German for certain," she says of her potential fifth language proficiency.



LIVE WIRES

Board meeting Feb. 15, 9 a.m.

The next meeting of the LPEA Board of Directors is set for Wednesday, Feb. 15, 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.

Application deadline

High school seniors are reminded that deadline to apply for the variety of scholarships available through LPEA is March 1. For more information or to download applications visit www.lpea.coop. Direct questions to Jeannie Bennett, 970.382.3505.

President's Day closures

LPEA's offices in Durango and Pagosa Springs will be closed Monday, Feb. 20 in observance of President's Day.

Round Up Grants

The following organizations received Round Up or Educational grants, distributed by the Round Up Foundation Board of Directors, in December: Community Foundation of Southwest Colorado, Durango Botanical Gardens, FLC Robotic GNOME Lab, La Plata Open Space, and Sexual Assault Services Organization

CO-OP MEMBERS

Ask...

Q: I've been hearing that Time-of-Use lower cost hours have increased 33 percent. What are the hours, and should I sign up?

A: We definitely think you should sign up. With the new, expanded lower cost time periods, we estimate all our members can start saving money on their electric bills – even if they don't change their electricity usage habits. Of course, the more energy usage you can shift to the off-peak, lower cost period, the more you'll save.

The 2017 residential off-peak, lower cost hours are Monday-Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and 10 p.m. to 6 a.m., plus all day Sunday and designated holidays. Call 970.247.5786 to sign up and start saving.



No matter what, Safety is always #1

BY JUSTIN TALBOT | MANAGER OF OPERATIONS | JTALBOT@LPEA.COOP

Electricity has made our world better, and most of us see it as our friend. We must remember, however, that it is very dangerous – and unpredictable. During a recent winter storm, one of our servicemen was atop a pole working on an outage when freak lightning arced above him. All was OK because he'd followed all safety protocols... but if he hadn't...

This is one example of why safety is the number one priority at LPEA, and we continue to consciously grow our safety program. The culture encompasses the employees here at work, but also follows them as they go about their personal lives. Employees are taking ownership and personal responsibility to live and work "safe."

With our linemen, the guys

build a brotherhood as they work day-to-day. They look after one another to ensure everyone goes home to their families. In our industry, the pace doesn't allow one to be disengaged. One wrong move, one misstep, one short-cut, one time not speaking out to their fellow crew members, could result in a horrible accident, maybe ending in death.

During Safety meetings, employees share incidents, and sometimes near misses, with each other. We review accidents that have occurred around the country – a great learning opportunity as the crews review what they would have done differently.

We continually review our standard operation procedures, and are part of the Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program (RESAP), a service of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), which strives to promote the highest standards of safety among electric cooperatives. And we train, train, train.

Technology is moving quickly as well, so we are also updating our safety measures incorporating new tools. For example, we have

implemented a new mapping system that allows our crews to use their mobile devices to assist them in the field, know where equipment is and how to get power restored quickly but in a safe manner. The updates to our Dispatch office and the vehicle tracking system in our mobile radios allow us to find our field personnel in an emergency, and/or assist them in getting to the correct address or job site.

LPEA's employees take their jobs seriously. Most folks can't conceive what our crews go through on those cold nights or sizzling days when the power might go off – the sacrifices they make to get our members back in power. They're not looking for kudos. They just want to serve you – and we want to make sure they do it safely.

Recently your Board of Directors embraced our safety culture and passed a Resolution that supports safety a #1 priority. This is awesome, and speaks volumes to the employees to know the board has their backs when they head out to bring the benefits of electricity to all our lives.

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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](mailto:intake@usda.gov).

