

Time to love your ETS

They make for a good “counter” in the off-season. We won’t tattle if your Electric Thermal Storage (ETS) unit looks like the above during the summer.

“To avoid any damage that might result from lightning strikes during the summer months, we recommend that our ETS owners cut the power at the breaker,” says Dennis McCarthy, energy management advisor. “What happens, though, and we’re all guilty of this... all of a sudden, there’s a nice, open area to put ‘stuff’, and stuff does tend to accumulate in the ‘off-season’ on people’s ETS units.”

However, as fall approaches, and a chill takes to the air, LPEA’s ETS owners begin to think about “firing up” their units. To be more specific, it’s a matter of turning on the breaker and then the unit, and getting the system ready to provide gentle electric heat.

ETS units come in a variety of sizes, from smaller room units to whole-house units for central heating systems. They all work the same, however. Fondly and colloquially called a “box of bricks” – ETS units are literally highly sophisticated electric heating systems that use special ceramic “bricks” as a cost efficient way to heat a home. The bricks are charged or heated during LPEA’s lower cost, off-peak periods, and then the heat generated by and stored in the bricks is circulated by an internal fan. A thermostat controls the temperature.

The internal workings of the “box of bricks” is rarely, if ever seen by ETS owners, as it’s a sleek, unobtrusive unit (which yes, makes a nice shelf). But just like any electronic or mechanical device, the ETS units do require maintenance.

“But they’re so simple for the owners, they’re easy to forget, until something goes wrong,” says McCarthy. “That’s why this time of year, we want to remind our members to have your unit serviced. Make an appointment with a local electrician familiar with ETS units and have them make a house call. We always make sure to service our cars regularly, don’t we? Do the same with your ETS.”

To get ready for fall, remove all those items that have

Dennis McCarthy discusses maintenance of an ETS system with electricians from Durango’s CT Electric.



found a home on top of the heater. The bricks DO get hot, and the top of the ETS unit gets quite warm – to the point that anything flammable sitting on top could catch fire. Never take that chance.

According to McCarthy, inside the unit can be a scary place after a summer of dust and pet hair accumulation. A knowledgeable electrician will clean inside and out as well as behind the unit, and test the breaker to ensure the ETS will power up when needed.

LPEA will host a training session for local electricians on Sept. 10 at the Durango headquarters. To register or for additional information, contact McCarthy at 970.382.3506 or dmccarthy@lpea.coop.

“And if you’re a member and would like to learn more about installing an ETS unit in your home or office, please contact us,” says McCarthy. “We do complementary on-site inspections and size the unit to meet your needs. They’re a great source of efficient electric heat, and incredibly reliable – even more so when you have them serviced each year.”

UPDATE FROM JENNA



I wanted to send out a big thank you for supporting and running the LPEA Youth Tour program scholarship. My D.C. experience in 2016 was not just a trip but a start to my career.

After returning to Durango three years ago, my passion for energy and environmental engineering took root. As you know, I was asked to return to the Youth Tour program as an NRECA Staff Assistant to guide the 2019 State Representatives during the Youth Leadership Council (YLC).

Because of your belief in rural youth, I have been inspired to give back to my community and a rising generation of student leaders. If there is anything I can do to give back to LPEA, the program and you in terms of advocacy or operations (whether that be giving speeches, writing articles, etc.), I would be happy to do so.

Thank you again for the seed you planted for me three years ago, as the electric cooperatives continue to empower me to this day and likely for years to come.

Yours Sincerely,
Jenna Engelken

LPEA reprises support of Animas High School Solar Car Team

It all started as part of their Animas High School senior project and student interest in alternative energy. Animas High School students Domi Frideger and Dylan Kroes initiated the solar car competition effort in 2016 with Team Energy Audacity, and that year constructed a solar vehicle from scratch in a cleaned out storage room at LPEA's Durango facility, and competed in the Solar Car Challenge, a nearly 216 mile race of high-school student-engineered solar cars from Fort Worth to Minneapolis.

Their success was thwarted that year, but THIS year, AHS students Jem van Tyn, Grady James and Henry Haggart, with the help of Joe Thomson and Akos Varga on the construction side, revived "the dream" and rebuilt the original solar vehicle. The team competed as "Energy Odyssey" in the annual race.

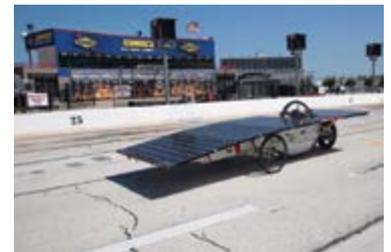
The team's effort was not without its challenges, but the students persevered.

"At the end of the race, we had not only exceeded our own expectations, but also the expectations of the race community," says van Tyn. "At the awards banquet, we were given the Guntis Terauds Award, 'Presented to the Solar Car Team displaying the highest level of Courage in the face of Engineering Obstacles.' We were thrilled to do this well, and we could never have raced without (LPEA's) support, as well as the help of the other teams at the Solar Car Challenge."

"In the spirit of supporting the future electrical engineers of the future, LPEA was delighted to serve as a sponsor," says Dan Harms, manager of rates, technology and energy policy. "It is so rewarding to see young people take initiative in programs such as the Solar Car Challenge."

Van Tyn urges community members to learn more about the adventure and the team's work at www.EnergyOdyssey.weebly.com.

"I just wanted to say thank you for all your help to make this journey possible," he says. "I am infinitely glad that we were able to make the final push to go to the race, and we couldn't have done it without LPEA."



In La Plata County, sign up for

CodeRED™

La Plata County wants you to be prepared in case of emergency and offers a simple, free way for you to stay informed during events that could affect your safety or property. Floods, wildfire, evacuation notices, weather events, and biohazards can unfold quickly and unpredictably. Those who sign up for the CodeRed emergency notification service can receive voice or text updates with alerts to pending situations. Sign up for CodeRed at <https://public.coderedweb.com/CNE/en-US/BFEA18547A8D>

“Staking” changes in Engineering

They're known as “stakers,” but the official term is Staking Engineer, and they're a crucial part of LPEA's member engineering support team, working with members on design and layout of the power lines for their properties or projects.

Four years ago Ashley Tokarczyk, who had joined LPEA as a Billing Clerk in 2013 and named Accounting Clerk in 2014, stepped up to take on a new challenge at the cooperative and learn the discipline of “staking.” After completing her extensive Staking Engineer Apprentice program, and passing the eight-hour exam, Tokarczyk is now an official “Staker.”

The timing of Tokarczyk's advancement is fortuitous, as she will fill the position of Jerry Fleener, who has now stepped down from his Staker position, moving into a deserved retirement after 23 years with LPEA.

With the changes in the Staker Engineering line-up, LPEA opened up an opportunity for an additional 4 year Apprentice Staker. Jacque Ireland, who joined LPEA in 2016 as a Billing Clerk was awarded the position. She will now embark on the four-year journey to learn design and engineering of electrical distribution systems.

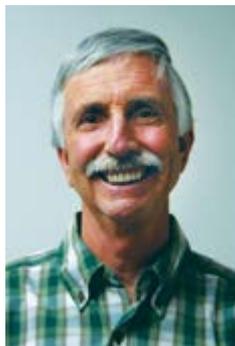
Both Tokarczyk and Ireland are graduates of Fort Lewis College.

“We're happy for Jerry, but sad to say good-bye to him, but he can go into his retirement knowing he's done a great job for LPEA and our members,” says Gayle Norman, manager of staking services. “At the same time, we're very proud of Ashley. She's worked very hard for these credentials. And we welcome Jacque. Having knowledgeable stakers is vital to an electric company, and our members are in good hands.”

LPEA offers a variety of career opportunities. To keep current, visit www.lpea.coop and sign up for regular job availability announcements.



Ashley Tokarczyk



Jerry Fleener



Jacque Ireland

LIVE WIRES

Board meeting September 18

The LPEA Board of Directors will hold its regularly scheduled meeting Wednesday, Sept. 18, in Pagosa Springs at the Ross Aragon Community Center. 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. If you're unable to attend in person, the meeting will stream live online. Log in at www.lpea.coop.

Notify LPEA of hazardous branches:

As wind and dry conditions remain (or increase), tree branches can present a hazard to power lines – not only the risk of them falling through the lines and causing an outage, but potentially also causing a fire. Look up and check your trees. If you have any branches potentially impacting LPEA's power lines call 970.382.9734 to have LPEA's tree trimming crews remove them safely.

Save the Date for Sight-in Days:

Hunting season is right around the corner. Plan to sight your scopes at the Durango Gun Club, compliments of LPEA's sponsorship Oct. 10 and 11, Oct. 17 and 18, and Oct. 31 and Nov. 1, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., conditions permitting.

Member Appreciation Luncheons!

LPEA will host two complimentary luncheons for all members, Wednesday, Sept. 11 in Durango, 45 Stewart St. (Bodo Industrial Park), and Thursday, Sept. 12 in Pagosa Springs, 603 S. 8th St.

“I'm very excited to meet our members,” says Jessica Matlock, LPEA's new CEO. “The luncheons are an opportunity for us to get together, get to know each other, talk about your concerns, and remind us all of the spirit of being part of a cooperative.”

All LPEA consumer- members – those who pay their electric bills to LPEA – are invited to drop by either LPEA office between 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. on the scheduled luncheon dates. No reservations are required.

The casual buffet meals will be catered in Durango by Back Porch BBQ and in Pagosa Springs by Smoken MOES Un-Real BBQ. The Bar D Wranglers will perform in Durango with Joel Racheff serenading in Pagosa Springs.

Members are asked to park out front at both offices, though handicapped parking will be available, and parking attendants will direct those requiring assistance. Golf cart “shuttles” will also be available for those who don't wish to walk across the LPEA facility yards to the lunch locations.



How may I help you?

BY RON MEIER | MANGER OF ENGINEERING AND MEMBER RELATIONS
RMEIER@LPEA.COOP



“How may I help you?”

This is one the more frequent questions posed at LPEA – whether you walk into our Pagosa Springs office, stroll into our Durango office or phone our Call Center (which is staffed by dedicated employees who are your neighbors and are also part of our cooperative).

It is a simple question to ask, but the answers are many. It probably is easy to guess that some of the answers to that question have some semblance of a response of “My bill is just too high!” But in reality, we have many more queries.

Members often call and want to learn about a better way to use electricity – not just saving them money, but helping our cooperative meet our goals of being strong environmental stewards. The answer to these questions always lead to providing information on our rebate programs, net metering and time-of-use rates. We offer rebates for new appliances, light bulbs, and now electric vehicle charging stations for our homes. You can get an EV charging station installed in your garage at nearly no cost with our rebates.

For those exploring installation of solar panels, we are here to help ensure we all understand what to expect with the PV systems as they interact with the LPEA electrical system. PV systems are not as simple as plugging in a toaster, so we all just need to work together. Call us!

Our time-of-use rates don’t just help lower you bills, but also allow for better efficiency in operation of the electrical system. With better efficiency we reduce the impact to our spaceship called Earth.

When it comes to helping our community, we have programs like our Round Up Foundation. More than 13,000 of our members “round up” their bills. These rounded up pennies on your bill goes to a community fund that is used to support local non-profits in our area. It is a small amount every year, on average just \$6 per participating member – but it truly adds up.

We also have our voluntary green fund program. Members designate an extra amount they would like to donate to a separate fund that is used exclusively to support renewable projects for not-for profit entities. Recently these funds helped a smaller community center in Arboles install solar panels on their building.

We also have quite a few programs that help educate our children about the dangers of electricity and what to do when they see a downed power line. We visit our local schools demonstrating safety with an interactive model town that has little power lines. This demonstration has a lot of little arcs and some smoke to really reinforce the dangers of electricity. This past year we also launched a safety poster contest that was very well received by the kids. Don’t worry though, it isn’t just about the kids. We have an adult version that we use with our first responders and anyone else who wants to see a really impressive display.

“How may I help you?” really does bring a lot of different responses beyond billing questions and how to hook up power. We are here to hear what you have to say and to exceed your expectations.



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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