

LPEA Currents

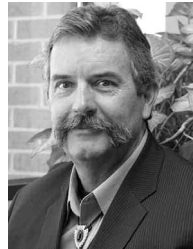
INSIDE ...

- * Students To Attend Camp
- * Bill Payment Option Changes
- * LPEA Helps Pagosa Residents
- * Renewable Meetings Set For 2010
- * Ranchers/Irrigators Workshop

LPEA's System Holds Tough Through Winter of 2009-10

BY STEVE GREGG, MANAGER OF OPERATIONS

Spring time in the San Juans: the first day of spring has just arrived and I'd dare say, we're all ready for it.



Steve Gregg

As I write this, we're coming off a dramatic 2009-2010 winter season. Our area was colder, based on a 30-year average of heating degree days (a common, relative measurement of how cold the weather is during a period of time), by 19 percent and we experienced an above average snowfall of 111 percent in the San Juan River basin (water-data.com). All of this contributed to plenty of sore muscles and backaches from moving that snow. Interestingly, though, when I think back 50-60 years, this is the type of winter southwestern Colorado used to have year after year.

While the snow was intense, LPEA (and our members) enjoyed the result of years of hard work to rebuild our system and keep it in top operational shape to withstand the severe storms that can cause an electric system to fail. This winter's storms were very intense at times, and our system withstood the storms. In looking at the last 10 years, this winter season has resulted in the lowest number of outages cause by storms (although LPEA has seen an increase in damaged equipment from ice build-up and snow removal efforts).

Maintenance is a major investment for your cooperative. For 2010, LPEA has a system projects budget, covering Archuleta and La Plata counties, of more than \$18 million to implement our ongoing plan, including replacement of aging poles, wire, transformers and more.

Tree trimming is also a major area of focus, and sometimes controversial, but we hope our members are now realizing why LPEA places such an emphasis on removing hazard trees. With all this winter's snow, if we hadn't invested significantly in our tree-trimming program, many of you would

have experienced outages as trees and branches fell through lines. Every year LPEA invests nearly \$1 million to complete all scheduled trimming.

As we begin to put the winter behind us and as you start thinking about spring planting — whether you're gardening or planting new trees and shrubs — we ask you to remember a key safety issue before you start digging: call for an underground line locate. Simply dial 8-1-1 (or click on the link at www.lpea.coop). This free service will ensure that you don't risk damaging an underground line, as well as avoid an electrical accident that could hurt or even kill you.

The second important concern, if you are planting a tree, is to look up and be sure there are no overhead power lines that your new addition to the yard could grow up and into. You can be sure that if your new tree becomes a hazard tree, LPEA's tree trimming crews might need to cut it down the next time we routinely visit your area.

Safety to the public, employees and the electrical system all rank extremely high at LPEA. We will get our summer maintenance done and be here, ready to serve you during winter 2010-2011. Help us continue to help you enjoy reliable electric service.

MAILING ADDRESS
P.O. Box 2750
Durango, CO 81302-2750

STREET ADDRESS
45 Stewart Street
Durango, CO 81303

970-247-5786 Phone
www.lpea.coop Web

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Terry Alley, president — District 1
Jerry McCaw, vice president — District 2
Pam Patton, secretary — District 4
Joe Wheeling, treasurer — District 4
Jeff Berman, director — District 3
Herb Brodsky, director — District 4
Harry Cole, director — District 1
Tom Compton, director — District 2
Bob Formwalt, director — District 1
Harry Goff, director — District 3
Bobby Lieb, director — District 3
Davin Montoya, director — District 2

Mission Statement
La Plata Electric Association provides its members safe, reliable electricity at the lowest reasonable cost while being environmentally responsible.



Selected high school juniors are sponsored by La Plata Electric

Local Students Will Attend Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp

Two area students have been selected to attend the 2010 Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp. LPEA will sponsor Cory Kerns of Durango and Mele LeLievre of Pagosa Springs for the all-expenses-paid educational and leadership experience at Glen Eden Resort set for July 18-23.

Each summer, the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp brings together approximately 100 high school students selected by electric cooperatives in Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma and Wyoming to learn about the organization and operation of a cooperative, as well as build leadership skills designed to assist students in meeting the challenges they will face in the future.

“As a chaperone at the 2009 Leadership Camp I had opportunity to really see some of these young leaders in the making — one of whom in the future plans to go to Washington, D.C., and represent southwest Colorado,” says Ray Pierotti, LPEA project specialist. “The camp is an extremely valuable learning experience for our youth, and I look forward to being part of the program this year.”

Kerns, who is president of the Durango High School Interact Club and involved with the Aerospace Design Team, lacrosse and more — and has climbed more than 25 fourteeners — looks forward to studying engineering with an eye for invention as he moves forward.

Excerpted from his winning essay, Kerns noted, “In the future, I mean to be a leader in every sense of the word. Now, while I’m young, I’m trying to get all the knowledge I can on the topic. The opportunity to learn at the CYLC... is enormous.”

LeLievre, also selected by LPEA to attend the 2010 Washington, D.C., Youth Tour, is active as secretary and treasurer in FBLA, Varsity cross country and track, as well as the High Mountain Institute, a leadership and backpacking program. She aspires to pursue a career in architecture.

LeLievre’s winning essay concluded, “It’s the subtle leaders in everyday life that make the biggest impact. Positivity, dedication, passion, self-confidence, finding themselves and the leading by examples are all my ideas of a good leader.”

“We are interested in honoring the selected students for their accomplishments,” says Greg Munro, LPEA CEO, noting that the students will meet with the LPEA Board of Directors following their experience at the camp. “We’re very proud of our leadership students and want to hear from them. We learn a lot from them as well.”

LPEA, a Touchstone Energy Cooperative established in 1939, provides to its nearly 30,000 members with more than 40,000 meters, safe, reliable electricity at the lowest reasonable cost, while being environmentally responsible. The cooperative offers a variety of educational programs and employment opportunities. For additional information, visit www.lpea.coop.



Cory Kerns



Mele LeLievre

LPEA Bill Payment Option To Change This Spring

National banking systems mandate automated credit card procedure

In accordance with new national regulations designed to minimize identity, credit card and banking information theft, LPEA will implement a new Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system this spring. The IVR will affect only those who opt to pay their electric bills by phone.

“We are being mandated to move to these more automated systems,” says Dennis Svanes, LPEA CFO. “For member privacy and protection, our customer service representatives will no longer be allowed to take payments over the phone. Our members will need to interact with a computer, and we know this is not always popular with people, but we have no choice.”

The step taken by LPEA is similar to changes being implemented at all businesses that accept payments. Essentially, the intermediary person (i.e. a clerk, etc.) will not be allowed to receive private information and can have only limited contact with an individual credit/debit card. The changes are initially being made at larger entities, but will eventually affect establishments such as restaurants, medical offices, movie theatres and more.

LPEA offers a variety of options for convenient electricity bill payment. Members with checking accounts, savings accounts, credit cards and debit cards can pay their

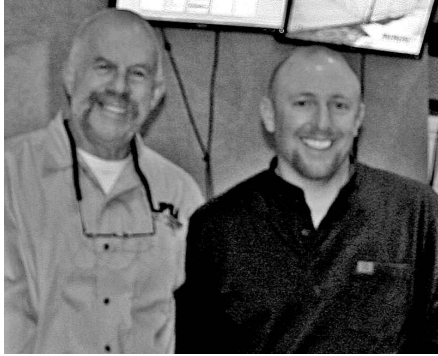
bills via auto-pay, at www.lpea.coop, by phone (but with the new IVR), and in person. Checks and money orders are still accepted by mail. For cash payments, members must visit LPEA’s offices in person.

“We encourage members to opt for the auto-pay program that automatically deducts the amount of the bill on a specified date each month,” says Svanes. “Not only are payments not accidentally missed, the auto-pay also streamlines efficiencies for both members and within the cooperative — helping save time and dollars.”

To sign up for auto-pay, log on to www.lpea.coop or visit the LPEA offices in Durango or Pagosa Springs.

LINE CREWS/DISPATCH AID PAGOSA RESIDENTS

Though LPEA didn't have many outages to which to attend during winter 2009-2010, thanks to solid maintenance and tree trimming during the summer months, the cooperative remained on call and assisted in some winter-related incidents in Archuleta County.



Regulatory Compliance and Operations Superintendent John Stephenson (left) salutes Dispatcher Darrick Robinson for taking the "extra step" to rescue a lost member.

County emergency folks called on LPEA to bring in the cooperative's snowcat (used for outages in winter) to help an isolated group of fatigued snowshoe enthusiasts, but even more vital, was location of a lone snowshoer stranded in Martinez Canyon.

As reported in the *Pagosa Springs Sun*, Kate Kelly set out snowshoeing alone and found herself lost with night setting on. With a virtual blanket of white surrounding her, the utility pole was her lone beacon of identification.

Every pole is numbered, but she misread the number, which was ultimately passed on to LPEA's Mike Alley, line superintendent in Pagosa.

Regulatory Compliance and Operations Superintendent Kelly was near. He then converted this to the State Plain coordinates that La Plata Electric uses and was able to give emergency responders her exact location.

"I was just doing my job," says a humble Robinson of the incident.

Regulatory Compliance and Operations Superintendent John Stephenson sees it a little differently, "The outcome could have been much worse. He put in the effort that very well could have made the difference between a quick rescue and a very uncomfortable night for Mrs. Kelly in extremely cold conditions. Darrick is to be commended for 'just doing his job.'"

"Mike called me with the number, but I knew it wasn't the correct location," explains dispatcher Darrick Robinson, who then took the extra steps to determine her exact position by calling Tri-State Generation and Transmission to get the longitude and latitude coordinates of the utility struc-



Project Specialist Sue Maxwell addresses those attending the inaugural Renewable Energy Meeting held at LPEA's Durango office.

LPEA QUARTERLY RENEWABLE GENERATION MEETINGS SET FOR 2010

In response to the growing interest in local renewable electricity generation projects, LPEA has organized a series of quarterly public informational meetings, open to all interested members. Upcoming meetings are slated for May 6, August 5 and November 4 from 8 to 9:30 a.m.

The first LPEA Renewable Generation meeting was February 4 and featured Hew Hallock, southern regional representative for the Colorado Governor's Energy Office (GEO). He advanced information on 2010 renewable generation rebates available to homeowners and businesses in April.

"We have been meeting regularly with the solar installers in our area," says Sue Maxwell, LPEA project specialist, referring to the technicians qualified to install solar thermal and solar PV (photovoltaic) generation panels. "But we're fielding an increasing number of calls from our members who are just beginning to investigate renewable generation and may not know where to begin. We hope these meetings will help answer their questions."

Not limited to solar PV and solar thermal, renewable electricity generation includes geo-thermal, small hydro, biomass and wind.

To be included on the email alert to receive detailed information regarding the 2010 Renewable Generation meetings, contact Maxwell at smaxwell@lpea.coop.

Q We hear things about "Call Before You Dig," and it sounds like a real hassle if we just want to plant a new tree. What's up?

A It may seem to be a harmless thing — digging a hole in the yard for that new tree or shrub, but it's worth it to dial 8-1-1 before you dig. Utilities are buried only a few inches underground, making them easy to strike even during shallow digging projects. More than 256,000 underground utility lines are struck each year in the U.S., resulting in injuries, property damage and electrical outages, and 35 percent of all those digging damages result from not calling before digging. No job is too small, and it's easy to do.

Within two days of dialing 8-1-1, LPEA will send a professional line locator who will mark the paths of any underground cables. Line locate arrangements can also be made by visiting LPEA's website for the link to the Utility Notification Center of Colorado or by going directly at www.uncc2.org.





LPEA Bids Adieu to Patricia Conway, Welcomes Aubrey Gillespie to Office Staff

As Aubrey Gillespie settles into her new position as an LPEA customer service representative, general clerk Patricia "Pat" Conway has bid farewell, retiring after nearly 15 years with LPEA.

Pat Conway began her tenure at LPEA as a switchboard operator in August 1995, moving to the general clerk position in 1999.

According to Conway, her favorite part of her job was "the people," working "behind the scenes" with LPEA employees but also having the opportunity to get out and about in the community to handle the myriad of errands needed for the



Aubrey Gillespie



Pat Conway

company. As she eases into retirement, travel is on her agenda.

Aubrey Gillespie, who relocated with her husband from Indiana for his teach-

ing position at Bayfield High School, holds a fine arts degree from Indiana State University. She comes to LPEA after serving four years with ALLTEL.

"I'm very excited to be here," says Gillespie, who enjoys camping and mountain biking the trails in the region, when not caring for her nearly 2-year-old son. "I have a lot to learn, but I'm looking forward to the challenge."

To keep current on job opportunities at LPEA, visit www.lpea.coop and join Constant Contact, opting to receive employment information.

RANCHERS AND IRRIGATORS INVITED TO ATTEND INFORMATIONAL WORKSHOP

A discussion of rates, billing periods, cost of irrigation service to be included

To help clarify utility rates, billing periods and more for ranchers and others who irrigate their land, La Plata Electric Association will host a free informational workshop Thursday, April 8, 5-6:30 p.m. at LPEA headquarters, Durango.

"How we charge for electricity used by irrigators is different than regular residential or commercial customers, and we've had some recent inquiries so we wanted to offer this workshop," says Mark Schwantes, manager of corporate services. "In addition, we'll discuss results of our cost-of-service study and give those who attend some options for possibly lowering their electric bills. We're trying to help everyone 'save their energy' whenever possible."

Also anticipated are discussions of practical applications such as energy usage, optional rates and demand reduction, and pending interest, information on micro-hydro electricity production.

Those interested in attending are asked to RSVP to LPEA Project Specialist Sue Maxwell, 970-382-7170 or smaxwell@lpea.coop. Refreshments will be served.

From LPEA member-owners:

We just wanted to say thanks to all the folks at La Plata Electric for doing such a great job. Through all the snow and wind we have not lost power once up here in Durango Hills. Your tree trimming and line inspection work has paid off. Again thanks to all of you for your fine work

BOB AND MARSHA PFEIFFER, DURANGO

LPEA SUPPORTS THE SAN JUAN BASIN REGIONAL SCIENCE FAIR

Each year La Plata Electric is proud to help sponsor and participate in the San Juan Basin Regional Science Fair, which encourages student learning and exploration, and promotes interest in math, science, engineering and technology by recognizing research, knowledge, ability and achievement.

Held at the La Plata County Fairgrounds on March 4, the Science Fair recognized middle and high school students from throughout the basin with a number of awards. LPEA's Dennis Svanes, Ray Pierotti, Richard Archuleta and Drew Timmerman served on the judging team — no easy task as more than 250 students entered.

LPEA salutes the competition's winners and all participants.

You are Invited! La Plata Electric Association, Inc. — Annual Meeting and Luncheon

Saturday, May 8, 2010 • Fort Lewis College

(Newly reconstructed Student Union)

Registration - 9 a.m. — Business Meeting - 10:30 a.m.

Complimentary lunch and giveaways for all attending members